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Nov. 26, 2009 Vol. 51 No. 47 50¢

Fracasa acuerdo hondureño 12

At critical moment

D.C. protest demands 'JUSTICE FOR MUMIA'

By Betsey Piette
Washington, D.C.

Over 25,000 letters calling on U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to conduct a civil rights investigation of the 28-year conspiracy to execute death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal were delivered to the doors of the Department of Justice in Washington at the end of a spirited march and rally on Nov. 12.

The letter campaign took on worldwide momentum earlier this year after Holder called for the dismissal of charges against Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska on the basis that prosecutors in that case withheld evidence favorable to the defense.

The letters to Holder on Mumia's behalf make it clear that in addition to a similar pattern of evidence being withheld in his case, courts on local, state and federal levels have all violated their own rules to keep Abu-Jamal on death row. The letters make a point that rules that apply for a powerful, wealthy U.S. senator like Stevens should apply as well to an African-American political activist.

Despite a December 2001 ruling by Federal District Court Judge William Yohn that converted the death sentence in Abu-Jamal's case to life in prison, he remains on death row and his life in jeopardy because of efforts by the Philadelphia district attorney's office to appeal Yohn's decision. Abu-Jamal has exhausted other federal appeals seeking a new trial in his case.

Meanwhile Seth Williams, who was elected earlier in November as the first African American to hold the position of Philadelphia district attorney, campaigned on the basis of support for reinstating the death sentence in Abu-Jamal's case.

Evidence withheld

Dr. Suzanne Ross of the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, who chaired the press conference and indoor rally at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, told how for 13 years the prosecution withheld evidence that a driver's license belonging to a passenger in the car driven by Mumia's brother, William Cook, was found in the pocket of slain police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Attorney Thomas Ruffin, in outlining the legal issues in Abu-Jamal's case, told of photos taken by independent photographer Pedro Polakoff, who had arrived at the scene of the Dec. 9, 1981, shooting before the police forensics team. These pictures exposed the lies told by key prosecution witnesses during the trial. The prosecution, which had access to these pictures, never shared information of their existence with the defense.

Ruffin noted that there was no proof that Abu-Jamal had his gun in his hand when he arrived on the scene, or that he had fired it. The prosecution never presented par-

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WW PHOTOS: JOE PIETTE

Pam Africa, right, at protest in Washington D.C. serving petitions to the Department of Justice demanding a civil rights investigation into the racist trial of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

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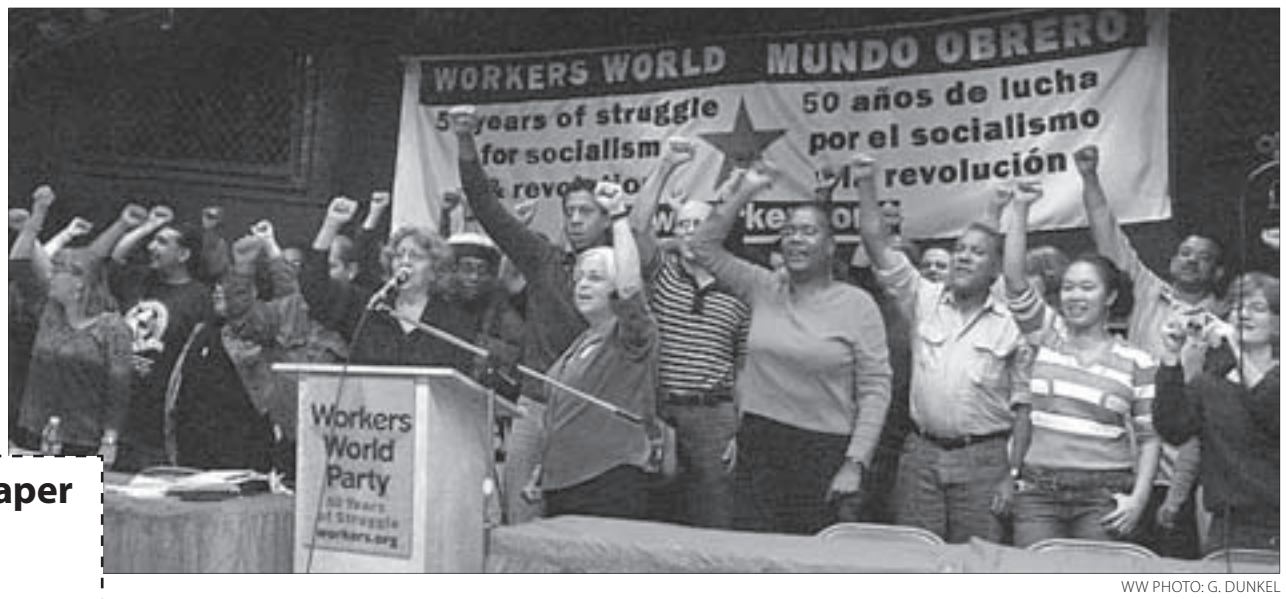

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Workers World Party National Conference celebrates 50 years

Youth and veterans of the struggle for socialism gather on stage to sing the International at the closing of WWP's 50th Anniversary Conference. See pages 4-8 for excerpts from speeches given at the first session.

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Fort Hood 1968: A center of Black GI rebellion

By John Catalinotto

The televised scenes and photos from Fort Hood, Texas, following the Nov. 5 shooting at the "Soldier Readiness Center" that left 13 dead, brought back memories of another time when that enormous military base was a center of political struggle. It was a different political period, when millions of young people were resisting the war against Vietnam and when African Americans in particular were in open rebellion against racism.

In that atmosphere of general mass upsurge, government provocations resulted not simply in individual acts, but in organized resistance. At Fort Hood, the result was a rebellion of Black GIs, most of them back from a year in Vietnam.

This was the political background: On July 23, 1967, a rebellion in Detroit's African-American community began. U.S. troops from the 82nd Airborne Division were sent in. Forty-three people were killed and thousands injured.

In January 1968, the Tet Offensive shook U.S. forces in Vietnam and gave notice that the liberation of that country from U.S. imperialism was inevitable. A workers' general strike nearly led to revolution in France. Back in the U.S. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April and Black rebellions erupted in 160 U.S. cities and towns. Among the forces used to suppress these rebellions were 15,000 Army and 45,000 National Guard troops.

Following Dr. King's killing, some 5,000 GIs from Fort Hood were sent to Chicago. There the notoriously racist Mayor Richard Daley, a Democrat and father of the current mayor, ordered "looters and arsonists" shot on sight. At least nine Black civilians died.

By August 1968, Chicago was preparing for massive anti-war demonstrations set to confront the Democratic National Convention. Fort Hood was preparing to send to Chicago troops from the First Armored Division, many of them combat veterans recently returned from Vietnam. There they were to be ready to use maximum force in the Black community, should it join the protests.

Assembly of protest

When Black troops heard of these orders, they spent the night of Aug. 23, 1968, in an all-night assembly of protest that the division's commander allowed. When morning came, however, military police arrested 43 of the troops for failure to report for reveille. Twenty-five of the 43 were combat veterans.

The GIs immediately got support from the outside. A GI "coffee house," the Oleo Strut, was in Killeen, Texas, near the base to support dissident GIs. A member of the American Servicemen's Union at Fort Hood called the ASU office in New York. A Black MP supplied the names of the 43 soldiers to the union. The ASU was an anti-war and anti-racist GIs' organization, based on the class differences between ordinary soldiers and officers, whose aim was to break the chain of command.

Within three days, the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee and the American Civil Liberties Union were supplying legal help while the ASU went to the base to visit the arrested troops and get their stories for publicity and to build support.

The courts martial took place in groups of five or six soldiers. The six troops the military brass considered the ringleaders of the assembly were tried at the end of October 1968. Their civilian attorney was the ECLC's Michael Kennedy. Life Magazine's Roger Vaughn was at the trial covering the case.

Instead of trying to crush the movement with repression, the brass settled on giving short sentences and letting many of the GIs off on a technicality. In the October trial, two were given three-month sentences and bad-conduct discharges, two got just bad discharges, and two were acquitted.

Mass resistance grows inside military

Mass resistance both to the war and to institutional racism continued to grow within the military. The Pentagon got more "assemblies" of the Fort Hood type, from Europe to Vietnam. One, which became known as the Darmstadt 53, wound up in a victory for the troops. Four of the Black troops were even able to visit Paris and meet with the famous Vietnamese negotiator Madame Nguyen Thi Binh.

Later, in November 1974, the then racist apartheid South African army advanced through Angola to replace the Portuguese who were leaving. Revolutionary Cuba came to help the Angolans. The South Africans screamed for help that the U.S. had promised. The 509th Airborne Infantry, the Rapid Deployment Force of those days, stationed in Vicenza in northern Italy, was readied.

Some 45 percent of the GIs there were African American or Latino. In their GI paper, "Getting the News," they wrote, "We don't know much about Angola, but if we are sent there we will shoot it if it's white." Their officers, many of whom were white, suggested that the 509th Airborne not be sent to Africa. It wasn't. The Cubans and Angolans smashed the South African offensive. The apartheid leaders complained bitterly, as dissident South African soldiers later told Max Watts, one of the key supporters of GI groups in Europe.

The history of those days shows that when a general mood of struggle grips a broad section of the population, serious military resistance can even stop an imperialist offensive. Can such a movement develop in today's volunteer army? After the Fort Hood killings, as the Obama administration weighs escalating the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, this possibility has to be under consideration.

Catalinotto was a civilian organizer for the ASU from 1967 to 1970. He helped organize the defense of the Fort Hood 43 and attended the October 1968 trial.

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on the U.S. thanksgiving holiday. Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. Thanksgiving day is a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the relentless assault on Native culture. Honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today. Join Us:

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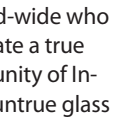

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Vol. 51, No. 47 • Nov. 26, 2009
Closing date: Nov. 17, 2009
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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: $25; institutions: $35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.
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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

TWU Strike:

‘Our fight was for labor rights’

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

After seven months of working without a contract, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) workers in Transport Workers Union Local 234 voted to go on strike one week before baseball’s World Series, when national attention was focused on Philadelphia. Management, corporate media and state and local politicians quickly joined forces against the union with the message: “Accept minimum wage increases because the economy is bad. You should be glad to have jobs.”

The union had other plans. On Nov. 3 they hit the bricks. Six days later they reached an agreement. In a period when unions across the country have been forced to take major cutbacks, the more than 5,100 mainly African-American workers received a more-than-decent contract.

As one picketing SEPTA worker put it, “Our fight was for labor rights.”

The issues for the transit workers were clear. SEPTA management pushed for a two-year wage freeze. They first offered minimal raises for the final three years of the contract, and then withdrew them by demanding that workers contribute 400 percent more for health care costs. Management also wanted to end workplace rights, including seniority in promotions. The workers said, “No deal!”

By the end of the strike, the final agreement did not contain wage raises in the first year, but it did include a $1,250 signing bonus, a 2.5 percent raise in the second year and a 3 percent raise in each of the remaining three years.

More significantly, there would be no increase in workers’ current contributions for health care. A three-year dental plan was added. The contract included a new provision that SEPTA would not pass on any increases in health care premium costs that might result from passage of the national health insurance plan currently in Congress.

None of the changes in the workplace rules that management sought made the final contract. Workers’ pension fund contributions increased from 2 percent to 3.5 percent but the contract raised the annual cap on pensions from $27,000 to $30,000.

PHOTO: KELLY VALDEZ
TWU Local 234 President Willie Brown speaks at Nov. 4 press conference at the union hall.

SEPTA’s consistent underfunding of the workers’ pension fund was a major sticking point. At a press conference during the strike, Local 234 President Willie Brown stressed that for years SEPTA put in as little as 52 percent of workers’ contracted pension contributions into the fund while the company contributed 75 percent for management.

Because of the stock market crisis in March 2009 the value of the pension fund had dropped from $729 million to $471 million. While it rebounded to $640 million by the end of September, workers expressed deep concerns that adequate funds would not be there when they retired. One TWU member noted, “When you gamble for 30 to 40 years of your life, you want a good pension at the end of your working life.”

Saying they were willing to pay for it, the union called for a forensic audit of the company plan. This specialized audit looks for potential fraud. The final contract did not resolve this demand but agreed it would be revisited outside of formal negotiations.

The capitalist offensive against this strike was relentless.

Throughout the strike, workers not only had to deal with negotiations with management but with a consistently vicious anti-union corporate media campaign that labeled the workers as “greedy,” “insensitive” and “irrational.” Workers were told, “This is a recession, and you can’t expect raises.”

Few journalists bothered to go to the picket lines, where the workers were more than willing to discuss their issues. Instead, the media coverage focused on how the strike inconvenienced riders. The Philadelphia Inquirer quoted a bond trader who said, “The union is a monopoly. People hate monopolies. One hundred years ago, corporations were the wolves. Now unions are the wolves.” (Nov. 5)

While the average SEPTA worker makes under $40,000 a year, the press focused on the top salaries of $52,000, which are reached only with considerable overtime and seniority. No media coverage mentioned that management salaries average $195,000, or that SEPTA CEOs get fully paid health care benefits. Moreover, unlike unionized workers, those in management have uncapped pension funds.

The press focused on the impact rather than the causes of the strike. No corporate media ever suggested that a positive outcome of the transit workers strike could have a long-range impact on the contract negotiations of other area unions. However, this must have occurred to Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, who pushed their way into the negotiations.

Often FOX News interviewed only Nutter, treating him like the voice of authority on the strike and the presenter of facts, while ignoring the fact that the mayor had his own agenda, as city workers were gearing up for negotiations. Incidentally, Nutter, who called the transit workers “despicable,” is paid $167,000 a year.

That riders were caught off guard at the start of the strike was primarily due to Nutter’s comments to the press that a strike “was off the table,” although the union never said this. Nutter later threatened to get a court injunction against the strike. SEPTA also waited until after the strike to announce a fare increase for next year.

Rendell threatened to withdraw $7 million promised to SEPTA to cover the signing bonuses if TWU continued to strike. The morning after SEPTA workers returned to work, House Republicans in Harrisburg pushed for laws barring transit strikes in Philadelphia. Public sector workers have had the right to strike in Pennsylvania since the 1970s.

TWU Local 234 showed what the power of workers withholding their labor can do. Already the SEPTA workers’ walkout is inspiring the 22,000 unionized city workers in American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees DC 47 and DC 33, who have been working without a contract since July 1. Shortly after the transit workers strike ended, members of DC 47 distributed an unofficial flier to City Hall workers encouraging them to take off from work to protest the lack of progress on their contracts.

Referring to Nutter as “Mayor Cutter,” the leaflet read: “The Cutter is not negotiating with our Municipal Workers unions but he found time to get involved in SEPTA’s union. ... Straighten your back and tell Mayor Cutter you are a city worker who deserves to be treated with dignity.”

Retired DC 47 President Thomas Paine Cronin told the Philadelphia Inquirer: “If I was a current city union leader, I would be saying me too! Me too!” (Nov. 10) □

Lawsuit fights Congressional attack on ACORN

By Greg Butterfield

On Nov. 12, the Center for Constitutional Rights brought a lawsuit against the U.S. government on behalf of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. CCR charged Congress with violating the U.S. Constitution when it recently voted to strip ACORN, its affiliates and allies of funding.

While the case seeks to bring immediate injunctive relief to stop the defunding of ACORN, it also aims to push back the tide of right-wing attacks on progressive non-profit organizations.

CCR hopes to educate activists and organizations about their rights under the law, particularly the constitutional prohibition against “Bills of Attainder,” which bars Congress from singling out an individual or group for punishment without an investigation and trial.

ACORN has more than 500,000 members in 75 cities throughout the United States. The nonprofit group has organized on behalf of local minimum-wage raises and tenant and housing rights, and provided tax aid and job training to low-income neighborhoods.

The group also does extensive voter registration among poor and oppressed communities, including registering some 2 million new voters before last year’s election–which raised the ire of far-right groups opposed to the election of President Barack Obama.

In September, right-wing activists posing as potential clients used a hidden video camera to entrap ACORN employees into making false statements, based on the phony clients presenting themselves as sex workers.

The tactic of right-wing “stings” is well known in the field of women’s reproductive rights. Planned Parenthood and other reproductive services providers have reported similar attempts by anti-abortion forces, posing as “under-aged” in order to trick well-meaning workers into violating restrictive state, local and federal laws.

FOX News and other right-wing media outlets then took up the cudgel against ACORN. Several members of Congress accused ACORN of being a “criminal enterprise.”

Congress subsequently approved language singling out ACORN in a temporary budget for all government programs. It bans the group and any allied or affiliated organizations from receiving federal grants or funds and from participating in any federal programs.

Many ACORN programs were abruptly discontinued. State governments are now moving to defund the group as well.

“It is outrageous to see Congress violating the Constitution for purposes of political grandstanding,” said CCR Legal Director Bill Quigley. “All the crimes and infractions committed by banks, pharmaceutical companies and private government contractors have been rewarded with bailouts, tax credits and billions of dollars in new contracts.

“Congress bowed to FOX News and joined in the scapegoating of an organization that helps average people going through hard times to get homes, pay their taxes and vote.”

For more information on the case and background on Bill of Attainder, visit www.ccrjustice.org/acorn-v-usa. □

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– Clarence Thomas
Executive Board
ILWU Local 10 and Co-chair of the
Million Worker March Movement

Low-Wage Capitalism
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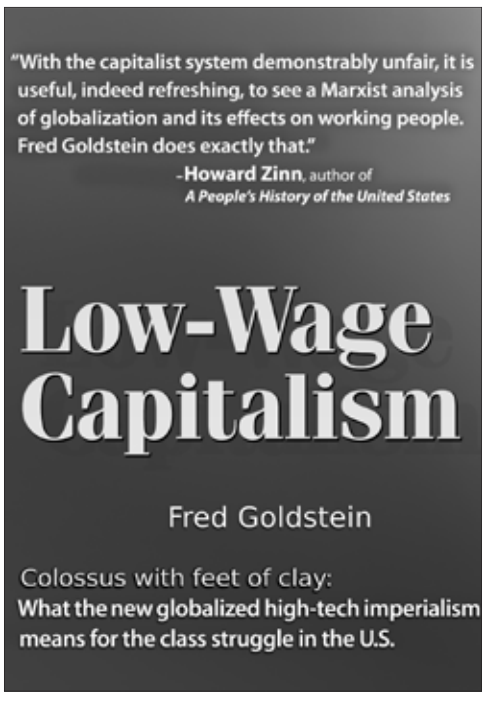

The capitalist crisis & young people

Why we must win youth to the political struggle

Larry Hales
WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

Excerpts from a talk by youth organization FIST leader Larry Hales to the WWP National Conference, Nov. 14.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for people between the ages of 16 and 24, unemployment is 18.5 percent, the highest it has been since after the Second World War. For Black youth it is 32 percent, 22 percent for Latino/a youth and the percentage for Indigenous youth is hard to come by, but according to an ABC News report, on some reservations the general unemployment rate is 80 percent.

The BLS statistics for unemployment can be misleading, however, as bad as they sound, since the numbers don't account for discouraged workers. For July of this year the proportion of unemployed youth was 51 percent, the highest it has been since 1948. From April to July of this year unemployment among youth grew by 1.1 million people. The summer months are a traditional time that young people, of high school age especially, begin to look for work.

Poverty, especially among young people has increased. One quarter of the Black population is in poverty, 23 percent of Latino/a families, 60 percent of Indigenous people outside of metropolitan areas live in poverty, and overall the more than 13 percent of the country in poverty will grow to 15 percent. Because the poverty threshold is ridiculously low, a family of four would have to make at least twice as much as the threshold to have some sort of security.

The number of youth in poverty increased from 16.2 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2007. As of last year, 34 percent of Black youth live in poverty and 28 percent of Latino/a youth.

These are just numbers, a snapshot of the reality of this country at a time of severe crisis. Along with poverty, dropout rates are increasing and higher education is getting further out of reach and, despite this, the cost of education continues to climb. Public and private institutions of higher education are raising their rates. The City University of New York last year raised tuition $300 per semester and is looking to raise it $45 per semester every succeeding year.

Incarceration rates continue to rise. One in 11 Black adults is under correctional control. The rate is one in 100 adults for the entire U.S., the highest rate in the world.

One in eight Black males in their 20s is in prison and 60 percent of the prison population is people of color, mostly Black and Latino/a, but a large percentage, per their population numbers, is of Indigenous young people.

The numbers are stark on their own but have to be put in a political context. When we talk about employment and unemployment and the crisis, we have to acknowledge the political period young people grew up in.

Young people may have grown up using computers, but the technological advances have wiped out the good-paying jobs their parents may have had, or those jobs have vanished as bosses have shipped them to areas where they have to pay only a small part of the wages workers in the U.S. were making.

Young people have grown up in the age of global competition for jobs, of retreat by the working class and of an offensive by the ruling class backed by the capitalist state, where unions have been pushed back and workers forced into accepting concession after concession, where the prison population has exploded as jobs disappeared and repression increased.

Youth live in a world where they are cut off from the history of struggle and have not had the benefit of social movements or the worldwide struggle for socialism. The political consciousness of young people in the U.S. lags behind. The willingness to struggle lags behind.

I don't want to generalize from one event, but the tragedy of young Derrion Albert has stuck with me, and the tragedy of the young brothers who are facing being locked behind bars for the rest of their lives.

It was an ugly event, but it is a symptom of a decadent society of young people filled with frustration and anger but nowhere to direct their anger. The mainstream capitalist media take advantage of that and the recruiters hope to use it to push young people into the arms of Uncle Sam, for his war against the poor and oppressed of the world.

But we have to win over youth to the struggle. It is the only way to cure the hurt, the depression, the self hate, to fight for a future they can believe in, one of people being in solidarity with one another.

Our class is battered and young people are no different, but we'll take the battered and bruised, the scarred, and make them revolutionaries to fight against their abusers for a better world. We must build our mass organizations, our youth group FIST and the party to do that, to forward the struggle—not a struggle of individuals for things but of the masses for dignity, for needs, for power. All power to the workers and the oppressed! Fight imperialism! Stand together! □

One person's path to the party

Excerpts from a talk by Elena Everett of Durham, N.C., to the WWP National Conference, Nov. 14.

Thank you for the opportunity to help open this beautiful conference where we have come together to celebrate 50 years of organizing and struggling for justice.

I have been a member of Raleigh FIST since 2004. As of April 2009, I became a candidate member of Workers World Party. The same weekend, we formed a new party chapter in Durham and five of us are here this weekend. We are honored and excited to have the distinction of being the newest party chapter.

Elena Everett

I'm sure my story isn't that different from many others here.

I was raised in a very conservative, very religious home. When the first Gulf War started, I vividly remember attending a "support our troops" rally and waving my American flag. Sometime around my teen years, that all fell apart for me and I turned into what could best be described as an apolitical hippie—like tens of thousands of other young people.

Then I discovered Ralph Nader and the Green Party, which turned something on for me, the idea that I could participate in working with others to reach for something different.

In college, I joined the campus Greens, which was multi-issue and exposed me to many different struggles. That was about the time the Bush administration started pushing us to war. I became a 24-7 activist. I started going to all of the big national demos. I met folks from the International Action Center, and I was turned on to the organizing around the Million Worker March.

All these experiences were life changing and have shaped my political development, but more than that, they have informed how I think and act in the world.

One of the biggest things I've learned is that while organizing can be incredibly exciting and invigorating, it's also incredibly hard and often confusing, particularly as our group in North Carolina is comprised of other fantastic young people who are also struggling and finding their way. We make a lot of mistakes.

One of the central things that has helped me through is my relationships with comrades in the party—and their long view, of being able to have an intergenerational dialogue, of being able to put what's going on in our little corner of the world into global and historical perspective, and feeling that I, personally—and the groups that I work with—are part of a long legacy and a tradition of fighting for justice.

I value being able to have intergenerational dialogues with my comrades in the struggle, and to be able to learn from their experiences and feel genuinely cared for as a person and as someone who's joined the movement.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the reasons why, after working with many of you for five years, this party won me over.

First: Workers World does work. Y'all don't just talk about revolution; you work for it every day. I met the party when Dustin and Imani came down with a van-load of organizers and activists to defend a gay Filipino marine who was one of the first conscientious objectors to the war. They had come to picket in Jacksonville, N.C., in one of the most conservative areas in the state at a time when the drumbeat to support this imperialist war was at its loudest.

Second: WWP works with principled unity with all organizations working for justice. You don't waste time trashing other organizations and sowing division. You intentionally work to build unity on the left and to work in solidarity with oppressed communities, while respecting and defending the right to self-determination.

Third: WWP has a vision and a politic based on a material analysis of history and power that has helped me understand my role as a woman and as a white person and as a southerner who lives in a system of exploitation that feeds off patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and heterosexism—and that those systems of power and control damage everyone. And that only by uniting, by practicing solidarity, and by being actively engaged in struggle can we begin to heal as people and build the kind of work we all need and deserve.

So today, I am proud and honored to be among so many amazing fighters, people who not only act, but also take the time to be strategic and thoughtful about how we engage in this work. I honor my elders here. My hope, my dream, is that when I am 79—50 years from now—that I might again have the opportunity to speak to some of those gathered here, and look back at how we did it, how we worked and struggled together to build a workers world.

From my sisters and brothers in the immigrant struggle—Sí se puede! □

D.C. protest demands 'Justice for

Continued from page 1

affin tests for gunshot residue. The prosecution claimed that this standard test administered to a defendant's hands in cases when a gun was the murder weapon had not been performed in Abu-Jamal's case.

Solidarity with Muslim political prisoners

The press conference and protest expressed open solidarity with victims of the state's Cointelpro-like campaign that has targeted over 400 Muslims and recently resulted in FBI agents gunning down Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah in Detroit on Oct. 31.

Several family members and supporters of the Fort Dix Five from N.J. attended the events. Lejla Duka, the 11-year-old daughter and niece of three of these Muslim political prisoners, spoke to the media. Two family members of another Muslim prisoner, Shifa, came from Atlanta to take part, and organizers with Project Salam, an organization that works to draw attention to these and other cases, attended from Albany, N.Y.

In an important act of solidarity, plans for a separate protest at the Justice Dept. on Nov. 21 to demand that Holder investigate the growing human rights violations against Muslims in the U.S. were changed in order to join forces on Nov 12.

Impressive international solidarity

Fignole Saint-Cyr, president of the Autonomous Unions of Haiti, delivered 986 signed letters collected on Abu-Jamal's behalf and flew into Washington to attend a press conference earlier in the day.

Migrants, the international working class and May Day

Excerpts from a talk by WW Secretariat member Teresa Gutierrez to the WWP National Conference, Nov. 14.

To add to the long list of crimes against humanity perpetrated by imperialism, we can include today's unprecedented wave of human migration. I speak not only of the millions of undocumented migrants forced to leave their countries in hazardous boats or sweltering windowless trucks, transport that too often becomes the coffins for too many.

I speak also of the immense number of workers who are documented and move from one country or continent to another because of little opportunity at home. And I speak of the massive number of people who are forced to migrate as a result of natural environmental disasters aggravated by the neglect of capitalist governments: climate refugees.

A ravaging profit-driven war-mongering imperialist system has produced a sea of workers whose true numbers may never been known—who are thrust from one part of the world to another against their will.

But in that sea of workers lies the demise of imperialism. For this is an army in the making, an army of workers whose eyes have been opened about the true nature of capitalism.

Here are some of the numbers, which are very conservative estimates.

In 2006, 426 natural disasters occurred in 108 countries, affecting 143 million people. In 2008, climate-related natural disasters like droughts and floods forced 20 million people out of their homes.

Another 4.6 million were internally displaced by so-called conflicts.

That same year 5 million were displaced by flooding in India. In 2008 in the Philippines, nearly 2 million were forced from their homes by storms. Filipinos were devastated once again by another typhoon a few weeks ago.

We will never forget Hurricane Katrina, where at least 1,500 people died in New Orleans alone. Tens of thousands more were forced out of their homes as a result of capitalist neglect.

Hurricane Katrina will always be synonymous with one of the greatest racist acts of genocide against African Americans in this country ever.

Workers being forced to migrate even for backbreaking and low-paying jobs amounts to what has been recently coined by Filipinos as a massive "brain and brawn drain."

The stories of these workers are some of the greatest human tragedies. The tears that have been shed for them would probably fill an ocean.

We know about the tragedies of those who die in Arizona, the sweatshops of Los Angeles or the detention centers of New York.

But too little is known here about the workers from Algeria, Morocco and Kenya as they make their way to Europe.

One-third of the 200 million international migrants live in Europe. Migration to Europe has become a trail of tears. Some reports state that since 1988 over 14,000 people have died on the European

Teresa Gutierrez

borders. At least 6,000 are missing at sea.

In the often photographed Mediterranean Sea, at least 11,000 people have died in the last few years. Heading towards Spain 5,000 more have died in the waters. Inside ferries and cargo vessels, hundreds more die of asphyxiation.

The Sahara Desert is a dangerous but obligatory passage. Almost 2,000 people have died in that desert since 1996 and that is conservative. In the mountains of Turkey and Greece, 112 people have frozen to death as they tried to make it to Europe.

If they make it in, increased racism and xenophobia awaits. Europe, taking a U.S. cue, is passing anti-immigrant legislation, such as Fortress Europe.

Yet the tide cannot be stopped. Over 200 million people worldwide live outside their country of birth. Nineteen cities around the world have 1 million or more foreign born.

We are in a unique moment in history. The contradiction between the socialized means of production and capitalist private property relations is on a phenomenal world scale.

The workers of the world travel the world like never before, although mainly under duress. But it has resulted in a global workforce where barriers of language and culture are being chipped away. Forced migration has laid the basis for an army whose instincts are thoroughly anti-capitalist. Its potential has yet to be tapped but it is nonetheless there.

There is one day when workers around the world—from the Philippines to France, from Bolivia to Bangladesh, from Kenya and Cuba to Canada and Korea—come together.

And that day is May Day.

We must leave the 2009 50th anniversary conference with this in mind: because of our work, because of our Leninism in particular, we are in a key position with regards to building May Day 2010. We take that responsibility seriously, with no other objective in mind than advancing the struggle.

We aim to unite U.S.-born workers with immigrants: We want it, we work for it, we demand it!

And we are getting ready. On one front alone, there is an explosion waiting to happen.

Millions around the world cannot go home because there are no jobs. Yet the bosses no longer want them in the capitalist countries. This is a tension that is sure to explode. Where can these workers go?

They must go into the offices and buildings of all the working-class organizations around the world who want what we want.

And that is to build the class struggle, to build May Day 2010 and every year after that.

Long Live May Day! □

Mumia'

Saint-Cyr stated, "Right now the world should observe American justice because the U.S. is supposed to stand for democracy. Justice should not be two-faced. Justice for Black people and for white people should be equal."

Thousands of signed letters were also gathered in Germany, where the city council in Munich passed a resolution demanding justice and a new trial for Mumia and the abolition of the death penalty in the U.S.

Letters were sent from South African labor and political groups that had engaged in their own fight to overturn the racist apartheid system and recognized Abu-Jamal as a victim of racist injustice in the U.S. Other letters came from Japan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Spain and throughout Latin America.

From the U.S. there were letters and resolutions from unions, churches, national organizations including the NAACP and the National Lawyers Guild, Congressperson Charles Rangel and progressive politicians like Cynthia McKinney. Representatives of the NAACP, Amnesty International, the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, the International Action Center, the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights and the Riverside Church Prison Ministry also spoke.

In closing the indoor event, Pam Africa, with the MOVE organization and International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, stated, "Mumia was railroaded and the evidence is there. Mumia is not on trial here—the movement is. It's up to us to stand up for what's right." □

Political problems and revolutionary potential

Excerpted talk from Secretariat member Fred Goldstein, at the Nov. 14-15 Workers World Party National Conference in New York.

We are a party of fighters, but we also must carefully analyze what is going on around us and what direction things are taking.

Using Marxism is the surest guide. Marx showed over 150 years ago that as capitalism grew it would bring more and more workers into a vast socialized network of production all over the world. But the entire economy, all the means of production and services would be privately owned and run for the profit of the owners.

Marx showed that the tendency of the capitalists in pursuit of maximum profits was to make more and more efficient machinery—more technology, computers, software, robots, etc.; to put more of workers' skills into machinery, making the workers less needed and reducing the skills needed so they can pay workers less and get more production. That way the bosses get more and more surplus value.

Marx also showed that this historical tendency of capitalism would lead to the eventual pauperization of the workers and their families and that sooner or later it would put more and more of a strain on the system, and finally lead to a collapse and to conditions for revolution.

This is the process that is now going on before our very eyes!

The capitalist system never really had a normal economic recovery from the Depression. It survived a growing pre-revolutionary sit-down strike movement among the workers by plunging into a catastrophic world war which killed 50 million or more.

Right now there is a deepening jobless recovery, and this is just the beginning. There are greater crises ahead.

To get a sense of where this capitalist crisis is going for the workers and for society as a whole, take the example of the recovery of Ford Motors. Ford went from losing billions of dollars to racking up a billion in profit in the last quarter. Mind you, this profit went up while sales went down.

How does this happen? Partly it was the government-subsidized Cash for Clunkers program. But the big story is that Ford laid off 53,000 workers and shut down 15 plants since 2006. It means that in order to retain profitability, the auto industry is shrinking production because they cannot sell at a profit.

But what happens when the auto industry shuts down plants? It means that dealerships shut down. Communities are destroyed. More than that—jobs are lost in parts plants, in steel, in rubber, in glass, in plastic, in paint, in fabric, in microchips, in robot production and so forth. Mechanics and salespeople and clerical workers lose jobs.

This vicious chain affects most all of the industries, chain stores, shopping malls, restaurant chains, because the profit system has reached a point where workers have been made so productive at creating

Fred Goldstein

WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

wealth that they are thrown out of work. As capitalism pauperizes the workers, who will buy the cars? The system destroys its own markets. Capitalism is reaching the limits of the system of exploitation.

The government and the experts keep looking for positive signs. A positive sign to them is that "only" 510,000 workers lost their jobs last month. But they cannot tell you how the close to 30 million unemployed or underemployed workers are going to be put back to work in a shrinking economy.

This affects not just employed workers but youth, single mothers on welfare, the elderly; it affects all those who are not owners. To the capitalists the youth, especially Black and Latino/a youth, are completely dispensable. The bosses have no jobs for them. They can't be exploited for profit. So capitalism does not care about them.

Mothers on welfare—who are doing the

Continued on page 8

Themes of WWP conference

Revive class struggle, strengthen international solidarity

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

Two main themes ran through the 2009 Workers World Party National Conference: the revival of serious class struggle in the United States as the capitalist crisis brutally strips the workers and oppressed of their jobs, homes and health, and the need to strengthen international workers' solidarity in the face of corporate globalization and increasing militarism and war.

No one took these huge tasks lightly. But the many speakers resonated with confidence that WWP, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, had the experience and the program to rise to the challenges.

"Don't be afraid of hard issues," said Secretariat member Larry Holmes in a summation of the conference. "Surviving through years of political reaction has made us tougher. We have what the workers need. Build a workers' world!"

The conference was held on Nov. 14-15 in New York. Even more than in previous years, this one rocked with the input of those most oppressed: African American, Latino/a, youth, lesbian, gay, bi and trans, and immigrant activists, who spoke from the stage and from open mikes in the audience. The majority of speakers were women. The diversity reflected the party's long history of applying affirmative action internally while fighting racism, male chauvinism, immigrant bashing and oppression of LGBT people.

The youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together detailed how the worst economic crisis since the Depression of the 1930s was devastating young people. FIST held a workshop so youth from different parts of the country could exchange ideas on how to coordinate struggles on campuses and in the communities.

Allies from different organizations and unions brought greetings to the conference and contributed to the discussion. A high point was a talk by Armando Robles, president of the United Electrical Workers local that carried out a successful occupation of the Republic Doors and Windows plant in Chicago, winning benefits the company had denied the workers when it summarily tried to close its doors and walk away. Dante Strobino of FIST, himself a UE organizer, introduced Robles. Jill White of Chicago WWP told of organizing a massive solidarity demonstration with the Republic workers.

Using Marxism as a weapon

In prepared presentations, WWP leaders again and again used the tools of Marxism and Leninism to define the problems facing the working class and oppressed peoples today and to chart a path of resistance.

In the opening session FIST leader Larry Hales reviewed the horrific statistics of youth unemployment and poverty, particularly in communities of color. Capitalism makes people "bruised, brutal and hurt," said Hales, but there's "a better world to fight for" and young people can be made into revolutionary fighters for socialism.

WWP PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Teresa Gutierrez, a member of the party's Secretariat who recently went to Honduras and then to a conference on migrants in Greece, called the waves of migration caused by lack of opportunity a "crime of capitalism" and saw the 200 million uprooted workers around the world as "an army in the making." Gutierrez and later speakers focused on the role of migrants in reviving May Day as an international day of workers' struggle.

Dispelling any notion that the present "recovery" will help the workers, Secretariat member and author Fred Goldstein went over the figures: more money in the pockets of the rich even as the job hemorrhage continues. Ford Motors got government subsidies but its sales are down and 53,000 Ford workers have been laid off. "The system of capitalist exploitation is reaching its limits," he said, and reviewed Marx's findings on how the bosses will destroy their own markets to increase profits. Just as in the 1930s, it's only militant workers' struggles that can bring about any relief from the capitalist government.

Larry Holmes dealt with the relationship between the big union federations and the Obama government. Why didn't the unions bring hundreds of thousands to Washington to demand single-payer health care, he asked. Without that kind of mass pressure, the Democrats came up with "a compromise on health care reform that betrays women." Holmes also urged the unions to help organize the jobless in their own interests—"Unemployment aids union busting and wage cuts," he pointed out.

How militarism is deepening the economic crisis was addressed by Secretariat member Sara Flounders. Capitalism can't live without the enormous Pentagon budget, but it's dragging the system down. Even with all its weaponry and high-paid mercenaries, the U.S. can't defeat the resistance in Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world. Flounders also pointed out that the federal government seized four mosques in New York at the same time it imposed new sanctions on Iran. She called for solidarity with Arab and Muslim peoples.

Input from activists

The conference alternated prepared talks with an open mike for questions and comments.

Jen Waller, a young activist, saw no future for the world under capitalism, which exploits the land and the people. Julius Dykes, an autoworker with 25 years' seniority, told of the anger and fear among workers regarding another upcoming layoff and how a friend had committed suicide. He praised the party's work in the Pittsburgh Jobs March and Tent City, and urged a national jobs march.

An Iranian said the attack on Muslims is an attack on the working class. A young man shared that he was moving from anarchism to communism. An immigrant from Los Angeles said the prisons are full of the youth and homeless. A woman from Rhode Island asked for solidarity with soldiers' families who live below the poverty level.

People representing various struggle groups took the mike to thank WWP for its support.

Pam Africa of International Friends and

Working-class hero: UE Local 1110 president

By Betsey Piette
New York

A highlight of the Workers World Party national conference on Nov. 14 was an address by Armando Robles, president of United Electrical Workers Local 1110. In December 2008, Robles led his members in the historic occupation of Republic Window and Doors in Chicago after the company tried to close shop without providing vacation or severance pay for workers.

As he took the stage, Robles was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation and chants of "¡El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido!" (The people united will never be defeated!)

Robles described how workers at Republic Windows and Doors began noticing management loading office equipment into U-Haul trucks late at night in November 2008. Over Thanksgiving weekend Robles came to the plant with his 7-year-old son and followed a truck taking equipment from the plant to another area of Chicago. This was when he learned the company planned to shut down and move to Iowa.

There were other signs. Workers learned the company had only paid for their health insurance through Dec. 15. The company canceled the union contract. On Dec. 5, the workers were told to show up four hours later than their scheduled starting time. But the workers came early. Only three days before they had been told the company was closing, they would be without jobs, and that they would receive no vacation or severance pay—in violation of state laws.

Through the union, the workers had been preparing their response. Before he spoke, Robles showed a new UE video, "¡Hasta la Victoria! Until Victory is ours! –The worker occupation of Republic Windows and Doors," which gave a short history of this historic working-class struggle that is still unfolding. The video is available at the UE web site ueunion.org.

When the workers realized the company planned to close without paying their vacation and other benefits, they began to discuss plans for occupying the plant, taking into consideration who among them could risk arrests. Many among their ranks were immigrant workers or parents with children to care for.

On Dec. 5, when management gave notices to the workers and told them to leave, the workers said, "No, we're not leaving!" To make it difficult for management to make them leave they began scattering around the plant.

Once the occupation was under way, the 275 workers organized into rotational teams to tour the plant for security as well as making food for the sit-down strikers. As word of the occupation spread, other workers began bringing food and supplies in an important show of solidarity.

Robles described the important solidarity rallies held by workers in Chicago and around the country outside of Bank of America to draw attention to the role corporate greed played in this conflict.

This mega-bank received $25 billion in federal T.A.R.P. funds, yet refused to extend loans to the owners of Republic Windows and Doors to cover payroll and other expenses. A popular slogan throughout the struggle was, "Bank of America got bailed out, we got sold out!"

PVN PHOTO

Armando Robles

After five days of this first factory occupation in the U.S. since the great sit-down strikes of the 1930s, Bank of America offered $1.25 million to cover the benefits owed to the workers. The national attention focused around this struggle also led to a California company, Serious Materials, stepping up to take over operation of the plant.

"They signed a contract with UE that they can't hire anyone outside of Local 1110 and agreed to the same contract we had before," Robles told the audience. "This year they received stimulus money and we are now producing more energy-efficient windows, so demand for our product has grown."

There have been other developments impacting the previous owners. Robles described how ongoing efforts by UE resulted in one owner, Richard Gillman, being thrown into jail with a high bail because "the judge said this man threw 275 workers and 275 families into the streets." On Oct. 4, the courts filed charges against Gillman for plotting to steal money from the workers and other company's creditors–a clear case of corporate greed.

UE also found out that the former financial officer of Republic Windows and Doors was working at a hospital in Miami. "He was always very arrogant," Robles said. "We called a newspaper in Miami and told them who he was. We found out the next day that he was fired." □

Teaching our class how to fight

The following excerpted talk is from WW Secretariat member Larry Holmes, who gave a summary of the opening plenary session of the Workers World Party National Conference held Nov. 14-15 in New York.

Larry Holmes

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

If somebody looked at the White House log over the period of recent months, it is surprising that of all the visitors, a lot of labor leaders have been going back and forth, meeting with either Obama or his assistants. What is Obama telling these labor leaders, be they from Change to Win or the AFL-CIO or SEIU? I don't think he is telling them to have strikes and organize more workers and bring their workers to D.C. in the hundreds of thousands if not millions—which they should have done for single-payer health care.

I'm speculating about what they are told in the White House, based on what Obama said in a New York Times interview the day before the Sept. 20 March for Jobs in Pittsburgh. We didn't know if it was directed at our march. The Times asked, "What do you think of the protests in Pittsburgh?" He said, "They are useless. They are useless because globalization is a reality. Get used to it."

This is deep. This is part of what is spoon-fed to our class 24/7. I think the Republic Windows and Doors workers showed the light by showing that we don't have to respect someone's private property, even if for just a few days.

What was electrifying about it was that a small number of workers clearly scared the hell out of the ruling class, out of the bankers.

Our biggest problem is that our class has been untaught how to fight. It is a legacy of class collaborationist trade union leaders that feel they have some partnership with the Democratic Party and now with the government, which is an illusion in their own mind.

There are many reasons that the workers might give for not fighting. Some say it is so hard they can hardly survive; they don't have time to fight. It is not because they believe in the system. They know that capitalism isn't working. But that information is not enough.

It is an axiom of Marxism that while workers learn some things from their own experience, they don't learn everything. Some things they need to be taught by those of us who aspire to be leaders and guides. What is it they have to learn?

In these circumstances it is learning to unite and fight. Learning to fight is so simple, but it is not the end of consciousness, it is not the middle, it is the very beginning. On that basis, all further political consciousness including revolutionary consciousness is possible. But first you have to wake up, unite and start fighting.

That starts the dialectical process, all the juices flowing. Without that everything is abstract and grey.

In the coming weeks and months we are going to have to deepen our work. What does that mean? It means deliberating with our relatively small organization but also with our allies who I think understand this as well—and more and more allies—begin teaching our class how to fight again as a class—not each other. Not each other!

If we don't do it the ruling class will teach them to fight each other, or fight immigrant workers, or fight China—everybody fight each other. That is their message. Compete like dogs fighting for a small piece of meat.

This is central to our struggle for jobs. We can talk about how bad the unemployment is. We can talk about the different programs, the 75th anniversary of the WPA [Works Progress Administration]. Can we use that next spring?

Clearly we can't mount a struggle for jobs alone; we need help. And before we get that, we need to make an issue out of needing help. And this is where we come to the political struggle within our own working class—first with the trade unions. They need to learn to help the unemployed. It is not charity.

Unemployment is the enemy of all unions and all workers because it is union busting; it drives wages down.

Somebody has got to go to the trade unions and tell them, what are you doing for the unemployed? Are you helping them? Are you organizing a march or a demonstration or a sit-in?

We're going to do something. Will you provide the buses? You gave all that money to the Democratic Party. Come up with some money to help get some unemployed and homeless people to Washington or wherever else they are going.

We've got to push and push and force a divorce of this ridiculous relationship that the trade unions have with the Democratic Party and the government; it is an abusive relationship. This irreconcilable class struggle is one-sided.

Our class needs to get out of it. They [the Democratic Party] compromised on health care, compromised in smoke-filled rooms; finally wound up with the worst insult by betraying women—women's right to abortion. More than half the work force is women; they should have walked out. Someday they will.

What is our motivation for going to the workers? Is it our enthusiasm that very soon they are going to storm the heavens and make socialist revolution? And we're just waiting until they knock on our door for our advice? That is very nice. Perhaps that would happen, but I don't think so.

It is the other way around. Our interest in our class, the reason why we must engage it intensely, is because we don't want to abandon them to the ruling class, to the racist bourgeoisie.

This is the most important thing as we consider the 50th anniversary of our party. Let us rededicate our party to intensify its orientation, its direction towards and into the working class. We won't lose anybody. The best elements in the political movement who may not necessarily consider themselves amongst the workers, they will be won to the workers. Those who don't, maybe they shouldn't be there. But we will win the best of them, including many of the youth. I am absolutely certain of that.

Comrade Sam Marcy had a number of predictions that he made more than 50 years ago—predictions based on the science of Marxism. One of those predictions was that the revolutionary center of gravity—which was at the time he made this prediction in the East—liberation movements, the Chinese revolution—would ultimately converge with the imperialist economic centers in the West, principally the center of world imperialism, which is still U. S. imperialism.

Globalization has done pretty much that. It is just the political consequences that are lagging behind the economic consequences.

It is happening if we can win the best in our movement, the best activists, the best revolutionaries, the best progressives, anarchists, socialists, communists—whatever they call themselves—if we can win them to the side of the working class.

He had another prediction that was shared by Lenin. He said in his letter to an American worker in 1922, that because of the strategic position of U.S. imperialism in the world—and it is likely to be that way for a long time—that the multinational working class of this country is bound to be decisive in the world socialist revolution.

If we are as serious as those people were—and they were very, very serious—if we do our work, we will help realize that vision of worldwide socialist revolution. □

WWP founding members from left: Milt Neidenberg, Deirdre Griswold, Jeanette Merrill, Frances Dostal, Art Rosen, Rosie Neidenberg.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA SANDBURG

Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal acknowledged the party, and particularly Secretariat members Monica Moorehead and Larry Holmes, for their work in Millions 4 Mumia and in building a massive Madison Square Garden solidarity meeting for the imprisoned revolutionary journalist.

Brenda Stokely of the Million Worker March Movement raised the need to bring the working class together for a strong May Day demonstration and the importance of education on the history of class struggle.

Ignacio Meneses of the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange called WWP "a point of reference for the struggle in the U.S."

Shafeah M'Balia of Black Workers for Justice in North Carolina brought greetings from her group on behalf of "the oppressed working class of the Black nation." She told of the many programs BWFJ has initiated to bring together women, workers and youth.

Representatives of Freedom Road Socialist Organization and the Vancouver Mobilization Against War and Occupation were invited to the stage to deliver solidarity statements. Both groups have worked with WWP in a number of struggles. Bernadette Ellorin expressed greetings from BAYAN-USA.

Community organizer Rosie Bonds, aunt of baseball great Barry Bonds, told of homeless women sleeping under freeways while luxurious officers' quarters go vacant at the nearby closed Alameda Naval Air Station. She is now distributing Workers World newspaper in Berkeley, Calif.

Fight imperialism, build the party

Other plenaries covered the global flashpoints of U.S. imperialist aggression and WWP's 50 years of struggle guided by its Marxist analysis.

Monica Moorehead spoke on the task of a workers' party to build solidarity within the broader political movement, especially defending the right to self-determination for oppressed nations. She explained the need for a workers' party to build unity among its ranks if it hopes to win over the most class-conscious fighters.

Support for Palestine was covered by Bill Doares and Judy Greenspan. Doares recalled how back in the 1960s, when most progressives here refused to criticize Israel, WWP demonstrated in support of Palestine during the June War. Joyce Chediac talked about the struggle of Palestinians in Lebanon and the Lebanese people, who are represented by Hezbollah. All three speakers had been to the Middle East in the past summer.

Berta Joubert-Ceci, fresh from a solidarity delegation to Honduras, told how the people are struggling to take back the wealth stolen by the oligarchy and U.S. transnationals. "The coup started when President Zelaya raised the minimum wage by 60 percent," she reminded everyone. The Honduran struggle is part of a popular upsurge in all of Latin America. A message to the conference from Juan Barahona, leader of the Honduran Resistance, was read.

Abayomi Azikiwe of the Michigan Moratorium NOW! Coalition and a contributing editor to Workers World newspaper traced the connection between the struggle for jobs and homes in Detroit and the mass dislocation and poverty in Africa caused by imperialism. Another dynamic speaker from the coalition was Sandra Hines, who called Detroit, with nearly 30 percent unemployment, "a Katrina without the water."

Another Detroiter, Jerry Goldberg, spoke of building the party when the Midwest was a stronghold of organized labor. Autoworker Martha Grevatt of Cleveland reported how GM, Ford and Chrysler have abandoned Detroit, creating a disaster that is not "natural." But Chrysler workers rejected recent concessions by a vote of 3-1, presaging renewed struggle in this vital industry.

LeiLani Dowell spoke of the party's contributions to the struggle for women's and LGBT rights, and later on Bob McCubbin introduced Stonewall rebellion participant Sebastian Pernice.

Sharon Black of Baltimore stressed how crucial Black-white unity was in building

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Pentagon's contradiction and imperialist decline

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Sara Flounders

The following excerpted talk is by WWP Secretariat member, Sara Flounders, at the Nov. 14-15 Workers World Party National Conference in New York.

Twenty million people a year in the U.S. get sick from contaminated water. Forty percent of the water is dangerously polluted. This is a sign of infrastructure decay reaching life-threatening proportions.

The U.S. military budget is larger than the rest of the world's put together. This is a superprofit subsidy to the wealthiest CEOs and stockholders of the military corporations.

Boiling our drinking water is the real cost of the Pentagon budget, along with the millions who were unemployed, even before the global capitalist crisis. Now, since the global crash, there is more than 20 percent unemployment and over 50 percent for Black and Latino/a youth.

The largest prison population in the world is a byproduct of the Pentagon budget. And so is the one-third of youth who don't graduate from high school. As Hurricane Katrina exposed in a natural disaster, tens of thousands of people have nowhere to turn and racism is intensified. All of these social catastrophes while 1 trillion dollars this year alone is spent on U.S. wars—past, present and future.

Half of all our federal taxes go to the Pentagon. The total amount and the military proportion of the budget go up, up and up every year. Yet no serious debate, discussion or challenge is allowed.

This is supposedly the richest country in the world. U.S. workers have the highest rate of productivity and yet the workers are becoming paupers. They are getting a smaller and smaller share of what they produce.

Every year while the Pentagon gets more, in order to balance the budget, there are cuts of 10 to 15 percent a year in what goes to states and cities as block grants. This creates crises in health clinics, homeless shelters, schools, transit systems.

Congress or the White House, regardless of who is in office, won't challenge funds to the largest corporations, or their fraudulent cost overruns—hundreds of billions a year in government handouts or superprofits—without producing anything of value or use.

Corporate power is addicted to it. This is an unsolvable contradiction of imperialism today.

If they don't get this giant subsidy, the entire capitalist system will go into crisis. They can't do without it, but it is killing them. The sheer weight of the military is dragging the capitalist system down.

Decades of handing billions of dollars to the military-industrial complex has gone from being a stimulant to the capitalist economy to a sick addiction.

The giant funds to the military are no longer enough to soak up capitalist overproduction, to sponge up huge surpluses. They are no longer enough to restart the capitalist economy the way they once were able to.

Military spending does not create jobs. It destroys millions of jobs in the civilian economy.

When the global capitalist crisis hit last October, the system needed a direct infusion of an additional $700 billion just to provide immediate life-support to the biggest banks.

As our founder Sam Marcy explained, this huge military apparatus and the corporations dependent on it overwhelm all civilian institutions and endlessly press toward military solutions.

The Pentagon is the largest military machine on the planet. There are over 1,000 bases and fantastic high-tech weapon systems that can destroy the planet.

But they can't defeat the poorest country in world—Afghanistan. Why can't they pull it off?

They are incapable of improving any of the conditions of life, or bringing any progressive social change. It is impossible to win hearts and minds if you can only destroy. The think tanks and planners can't solve it or change it.

The imperialist military is built to serve the profit system, to provide superprofits and to enforce exploitation. Now it is so thoroughly corrupt and bloated that it can no longer function effectively to defend the system.

There are more contractors and mercenaries in Iraq and Afghanistan than there are U.S. military forces. A recent Congressional committee couldn't find out how many contractors there were or where they were or what they were doing, except getting paid.

The Pentagon militarizes the very air we breathe, increasing repression manyfold. Police and military units are everywhere. They intentionally create fear.

The targeting of Muslims in the U.S. and the charges of terrorism and manufactured government stings are all to justify a climate of war, racism and demonization.

On Nov. 13, the big news story was the seizure of four mosques, Islamic schools and an Islamic charity. Federal prosecutors claimed they were secretly controlled by the Iranian government. They bragged it was the biggest collection of counterterrorism seizures in U.S. history. This attack was timed to coincide with new sanctions on Iran.

This is ominously part of the continuing danger of a massive strike against Iran. There are continuing drone attacks on Pakistan that are widening the war. Along with continuing massive military aid to Israel is an effort to stamp out the heroic Palestinian resistance.

But it is not succeeding anywhere. It is igniting more resistance everywhere.

The future of their global system of imperialist domination is unraveling. That makes them more dangerous, desperate and unpredictable. But the Pentagon does not have enough soldiers, and they don't have enough collaborators or "allies" to fight their wars.

We have to link the fight against endless war and militarism with the fight for jobs, against foreclosures, for health care and the struggle for everything we need and have a right to. □

Political problems and revolutionary potential

Continued from page 5

invaluable service of bringing up children, a function without which society could not exist—are outside the chain of production and are not a source of profit, so the capitalists are quite willing to let them go under. The same holds for the elderly. It is all about profit.

What makes this crisis different from previous crises in the past 70 years since the Great Depression? In the past the capitalists have used military spending, wage cutting, pumping money into the banks, creating bubbles—the dot-com technology bubble, the housing bubble, and so on. But these means of solving the crisis have been exhausted. That is what is different.

The problems

To come back to the present: As society gets poorer and poorer, as the crisis deepens for workers and the communities, the material basis for rebellion and struggle are being created.

But because of the decades of attack and the severity of the crisis, it takes time for the workers and the oppressed to rebel on a large scale. No one knows when or where such a rebellion will begin. But because of the delay, the big business and the reactionary, racist, anti-women, anti-lesbian, -gay, -bi and -trans forces, are winning most of the political and economic struggles.

Above all, there is the constant attempt by the capitalist establishment, which fears a rebellion, to divide the working class by inciting racism, sexism, bigotry and anti-immigrant chauvinism.

These are all problems arising out of the fact that the workers and the general movement are not yet in the field threatening the establishment.

The inevitable awakening

All these attacks are bound to arouse a reawakening of the struggle. Already beneath the dark cloud of reaction there are rays of light beginning to shine through. The struggle of the Republic Windows and Doors workers who occupied their plant was a great inspiration and a model for the future. It made an impression on workers everywhere, not just in the U.S. The long heroic battle of the Stella D'Oro workers showed a mood of fight-back. The SEPTA transit workers of Philadelphia have won a victory, as have the SK Tools workers after a nine-week struggle of the Teamsters Local 743.

The Bail Out the People Movement led a Jobs March in Pittsburgh at the G-20 to bring the unemployment crisis to the G-20 conference. There followed a March for Jobs in Boston. There was a labor-led march of several thousand that crashed the American Bankers Association meeting in Chicago.

The student movement is beginning to bubble up in the fight against cutbacks, and student-worker organizing networks are beginning to grow.

The tasks

The task of our party is to rise to the occasion to meet the challenges of this new period of deepening crisis and awakening struggle. Our aim has always been to build a party of the working class. It is the working class that makes everything move, gets everything of value done.

We want to do everything we can to foster resistance to the crisis, the fight for jobs, the fight against foreclosures, and the fight for health care, education and to save the environment. But the overall purpose is always to undermine the capitalist social order.

For the capitalist system there is no way out but deepening crisis. For the working class and the oppressed there is a way out—the way of struggle and mass mobilization.

Our task as a party is to fight for a new socialist order in which this vast global productive apparatus will be owned and run by the workers, the source of all wealth, for human need and not for profit.

Down with capitalism! Long live socialism! Build Workers World Party and build a workers world!

See www.lowwagecapitalism.com for the entire talk.

Themes of WWP Conference

Continued from page 7

the Pittsburgh Jobs March.

John Parker of Los Angeles commended the party's courage and commitment in fighting against foreclosures and heading off attempts to divide the working class.

Julie Fry gave examples of WWP's long history of support for the Cuban Revolution.

China's tremendous importance in the world was stressed by Secretariat member Deirdre Griswold, who reviewed the political struggles there and their impact on revolutionary movements. She reminded everyone that Sam Marcy, who founded Workers World in 1959, had written as early as 1950 on the profound significance of the Chinese Revolution for the world class struggle.

Tribute was also given to legendary party founders Dorothy Ballan and Vince Copeland, as well as to those founding members still living whose 50 years of experience in the party continue to enrich it today.

At a session on party organization, labor militant Steve Kirschbaum of Boston urged everyone to contribute to the WW national fund drive, while Kris Hamel of Detroit stressed getting Workers World newspaper into the hands of workers with regularity and consistency. Richard Kossally of New York and Mike Martinez of Miami stressed the importance of political education.

It wasn't all speeches. There was revolutionary music and poetry that spoke to the heart, thanks to Miya Campbell and Nana Soul.

So many solidarity messages came from popular organizations and communist parties all over the world that only excerpts could be read.

Workers World newspaper will publish the highlights of many of the speeches in this and coming issues. Video podcasts of the plenary presentations will be available at www.workers.tv.

The energy and optimism that flowed at this conference will surely be felt as Workers World Party organizes new struggles in the year to come. Hold onto your hat! □

Another side of the Berlin Wall

By Greg Butterfield

Twenty years ago, a labor organization was on strike under very difficult conditions.

This workers' organization and its leadership were castigated by the corporate media. The bosses threatened, cajoled and bribed people to cross the picket line. Scabs were brought in.

The heads of the international union colluded with the capitalists to undermine the strike.

Eventually, the strike was lost. But that wasn't enough for the bosses.

Not satisfied with lowering the workers' wages and benefits and breaking the union, they sent their state apparatus after the strike leaders with accusations of heinous crimes. The former president was driven into exile to escape prosecution.

The labor organization in question was Amalgamated Transit Workers Union Local 1202, which went on strike against behemoth Greyhound Bus Lines in February 1990.

But everything written above also applies to the German Democratic Republic –socialist East Germany–and the fall of the Berlin Wall a few months earlier, in November 1989. Both the capitalist class and some misinformed progressives have been crowing over the 20th anniversary of that event.

Picket line means 'Do Not Cross!'

Ask anyone who's been on strike if it is ever okay to cross a picket line, and you will likely hear a resounding "No!"

The Berlin Wall–so maligned and condemned by war-making imperialists and hand-wringing liberals alike–was nothing but a picket line on a much larger scale.

The wall was erected in 1961 in response to provocations from U.S. imperialism and its West German junior partner meant to destroy the attempt to build socialism in eastern Germany. These provocations included infiltrating East Berlin with anti-communist agents, military threats, and bribing specialists whose labor was need by the workers' state—the so-called "brain drain."

COMMENTARY

The disgusting myth that the Berlin Wall was erected to destroy the freedom of Berliners, immortalized in President John F. Kennedy's famous speech, is just the opposite of the truth. The capitalist powers wanted to crush the working class' freedom to build a society unchained from the profit motive.

The Berlin Wall was a world away from the apartheid wall built by Israel around Palestinian population centers, the U.S./South Korean military wall that separates family members from North Korea, or the expanded U.S. wall against immigrants on the border with Mexico.

What is the difference? Those walls are aimed at repressing the workers and oppressed.

The Berlin Wall, by contrast, was built in defense of the workers and oppressed.

Socialist Germany's accomplishments

The GDR wasn't the product of a classical revolutionary uprising. It was formed by an alliance of German communist, socialist, and workers' movements that had resisted Nazism and survived World War II, and the Soviet Red Army that liberated the eastern part of the country, all under the military and economic pressure of the U.S.-initiated Cold War. It was only established after U.S. imperialism and their new allies in the vanquished German ruling class had begun to build up West Germany as a bulwark of aggression against the USSR and its allies.

In some ways, it was a halfway house of socialism.

But whatever its faults, the GDR was a workers' state that provided jobs, housing and health care for all its residents. It provided aid and support, including military and medical aid, to national liberation movements throughout the world, including the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa.

The GDR provided a safe haven for refugees from fascist terror in countries like Chile and Argentina. Socialist Germany also provided jobs and education for guest workers and students from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East–many of whom were terrorized or driven out by fascist attackers in the early 1990s after reunification with imperialist West Germany.

East Germany was far ahead of any country in the world in lesbian/gay/bi/trans rights and freedoms. The gay liberation movement as we know it grew up within the German socialist and communist movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Regarding women's rights to education, jobs and housing, and especially in establishing extensive child care, the GDR made enormous strides. Much of this progress was wiped away when the GDR fell.

The German Democratic Republic had a right to defend its sovereignty from imperialism, all the more so since the border between East and West Germany was also the border between the imperialist and the pro-socialist world camps.

Those who cannot or will not defend the right of a workers' organization to defend itself—whether it is a union, a resistance movement or a workers' state—will never be able to carry out a successful revolutionary struggle.

Sincere revolutionaries have to learn this lesson, and it is incumbent on those of us who lived through those terrible setbacks to help educate new generations. □

Marxist 'think tanks' find no capitalist exit from world crisis

By John Catalinotto
Brussels, Belgium

Three Marxist "think tanks" met in Brussels from Oct. 28 to Nov. 1 for an international conference called "The Crisis and Beyond." They met both to characterize the nature of the crises on the world and its people, and to suggest paths for their resolution.

Almost all conference speakers shared the analysis that the current crisis is not simply a "financial crisis" or a "housing crisis," but a capitalist crisis of overproduction. They considered this a structural crisis—that is, it will not go away with a cyclical upswing or recovery. Many also discussed a food crisis threatening widespread hunger. Some argued that an environmental crisis raised an urgent threat to life on the planet. None saw a way out of the crisis that continued the capitalist system as is.

The three groups were the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, which is close to the German "Left Party" that made gains in the recent national election; the Trans-National Institute, which has offices in Southeast Asia and other parts of the global South; and the strongly anti-imperialist World Forum on Alternatives. The WFA is led by Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin and Belgian liberation theologist François Houtart, who the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization recently awarded the 2009 UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence. Houtart was a senior adviser to U.N. General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto, who last June organized the G-192—the Group of 192 U.N. countries—to challenge the G-20, the world's largest capitalist countries.

Many of the 45 participants were professional economists who had also worked with movement organizations—some in workers' parties, some with the World Social Forum—and most had solid academic and/or movement reputations. Among the participants were Susan George, who wrote "A Fate Worse than Debt"; Pedro Páez, an economic adviser to the Ecuadoran government led by Rafael Correa; Zimbabwean economist Samson Moyo, who is president of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa; and economist Wen Tiejun, dean of the School of Agriculture & Rural Development, Renmin University of China.

Most of the RLF invitees were Germans or from other countries of the "North," including two from the former USSR. The other groups were mostly from the "South." Jennifer Cox of the Poor People's Human Rights Campaign, based in Philadelphia, was one of two people currently organizing in the United States who were there. Some U.S. citizens living abroad also attended.

PHOTO: ROSA LUXEMBURG FOUNDATION

Hafsat Abiola of Nigeria and Samir Amin of Egypt at the 'Beyond the Crisis' conference.

'Capitalist logic should be replaced'

In a three-page statement summarizing three days of discussions, the group stated:

"Global capitalism has dragged the world into a severe crisis. The crisis is accompanied by the ongoing plundering of the planet's natural and energy resources, foremost in the South, imminent climate collapse, food crises with its devastating results like resulting hunger, poverty and migration. Moreover, the world faces growing social inequalities and deepening class division, along with the growing power of transnationals [corporations], wars and a tendency to authoritarian solutions. All of these various forms of crises are the consequences of a logic shaped by capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, (neo)colonialism, militarization and the exploitation of humans and nature. This logic should be replaced or the globe and humankind will face further pervasive conflicts.

"It is time for radical interventions. This means designing a vision connected to concrete projects of change with a clear perspective of transformation to solidarity societies. The most important goals are: rescuing the earth, stopping warfare, overcoming starvation and poverty, and achieving social equality and full emancipation."

While everyone was concerned about threats to the environment, the threats were seen from different angles. Some Marxists from the imperialist countries saw environmental destruction as the most urgent crisis that placed the world on the brink of destruction. Others from countries of the "South," who were equally concerned about desertification on the one hand and flooding on the other, also raised the problem that the imperialists would try to use environmental rules to restrict their region's attempt to industrialize.

An environmental conference in Copenhagen this December puts a challenge before Marxist activists to thoroughly analyze, not only to defend the environment but to make this a part of the overall class struggle, taking into account the needs of those most oppressed and striving for worldwide equality. There is no way this can be done within the imperialist system.

The question of finding new alternatives reflected the continuing weight on Marxist revolutionaries from the historic setback to socialism with the defeat of the Soviet Union 20 years ago. While everyone asserted there could be no capitalist exit from the crisis, the final document avoided a simple cry for socialism or communism as a goal. Yet the document describes as a possible goal a wonderful "solidarity society," which could only be obtained if a political change removed the capitalist ruling class.

Catalinotto, invited by the WFA, represented the International Action Center at this conference, at which he also found great interest in Marxist literature from the U.S. movement, especially Fred Goldstein's "Low Wage Capitalism."

WORKERS WORLD editorial

FREE Lynne Stewart!

Lynne Stewart, who is affectionately known as the "People's Lawyer" for her tireless defense of clients in social justice and human rights cases, has been ordered to prison after her bail was revoked.

In 2005—as the U.S. government was using their phony "war on terror" to justify their invasion of Iraq—Stewart was falsely accused and convicted of aiding terrorists by forwarding messages from one of her clients. She was sentenced to 28 months in prison in 2006, and has been free on bail since that time, pending appeal.

Now the U.S. is whipping up another round of anti-Muslim hysteria and repression—including the FBI assassination of Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah in Detroit, the attempted seizure of mosques and other properties from a Muslim organization in New York, and the continued frame-ups and convictions of young Muslim men such as the Fort Dix 5.

With this backdrop, a three-judge panel of the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals not only upheld Stewart's conviction on Nov. 17, but remanded the case back to the judge who originally sentenced her, urging him to consider a longer sentence. Prosecutors in the 2005 trial had wanted 30 years.

The "Justice for Lynne Stewart" Web site (www.lynnestewart.org) describes the government's case against Stewart as "an obvious attempt ... to silence dissent, curtail vigorous defense lawyers, and install fear in those who would fight against the U.S. government's racism, seek to help Arabs and Muslims being prosecuted for free speech and defend the rights of all oppressed people."

Stewart, 70, is known for seeking justice not only in the courts but also on the streets, appearing at many protests and rallies.

We must fight these attempts to shut down resistance. Free Lynne Stewart and all political prisoners! Stop all attacks on Arab and Muslim peoples! □

Petition demands end to attacks on Muslims

Federal agents moved on Nov. 12 to seize four mosques and an Islamic charity, the Alavi Foundation, using phony claims that they were channeling money to fund an Iranian nuclear weapons program.

The charge is preposterous that a few mosques in the U.S. and an office building in New York City, with an annual rental income of just $4.5 million, constitute a financial front for the Islamic Republic of Iran to finance its nuclear industry.

This is despite the fact that even U.S. intelligence agencies admit that no such nuclear weapons program exists (newsweek.com, Sept. 16).

This attack is just the latest in the ongoing assault against Muslim people, used to justify U.S. colonial wars and occupations in the Middle East and Central Asia. All progressive and anti-war activists in the U.S. have a particular obligation to stand in solidarity with our Muslim sisters and brothers and to defend their basic rights to assemble and worship as they choose. These are basic human rights which are also guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.

Stop the War on Iran calls upon all those who protest the attacks upon the mosques and who stand with our Muslim sisters and brothers and defend their basic civil rights to sign on to the petition below, and demand an end to these attacks. See StopWarOnIran.org.

Workers World endorses this petition and joins with progressives and anti-war forces in calling for an end to repression against all Muslim communities.

Petition Text:

I am writing to denounce attempts by the U.S. government to seize four Muslim houses of worship built with funds from the Alavi Foundation. The claims that this foundation was somehow involved in funding an Iranian nuclear program are as false as previous claims from Washington about alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iran and Iraq.

Attempts to seize the assets of the Alavi Foundation, a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charity that works to promote interfaith dialogue and to teach Islamic culture, the Persian language and literature, is just the latest act in an ongoing campaign of demonization, disinformation, sanctions, and threats targeting the people of Iran. It is no coincidence that on the same day that the U.S. government unleashed its attacks on the mosques, the White House renewed the long-standing U.S. economic sanctions against Iran, once again using false claims about "weapons of mass destruction."

This attack is a clear violation of the basic human rights to assemble and worship, just two weeks after FBI agents gunned down Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah in Detroit. It is part of an escalating number of political attacks, legal frame-ups and media slanders against Muslim people.

I demand an end to the targeting of Muslim people and mosques.

I demand an end to the campaign of demonization and sanctions against Iran. □

Honduran resistance and Latin America

Excerpts from a talk by Berta Joubert-Ceci of Philadelphia to the WWP National Conference, Nov. 14.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Berta Joubert-Ceci

I want to ask you to please stand up. Let us give homage to the courageous people of Honduras. That resistance that today, for 140 days, has been in the streets, demanding the restitution of their president, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, and the celebration of a Constitutional Assembly that will end injustice and inequality.

Let us applaud their courage and their fierce determination to end the criminal military coup perpetrated by the oligarchy and the U.S. This resistance that is armed only with their dignity face day by day military and police armed to the teeth by the U.S.

Let us not observe a moment of silence, comrades, but a moment of applause for the martyrs whose blood has instilled more strength into the people. For the resistance let us applaud.

This is a struggle between two classes—those who exploit: the oligarchy, the transnational corporations—and those who are exploited: the workers and peasants, the poor in Honduras. Two classes whose interests are totally contradictory. It might have not begun as such, but it has developed into it.

The constant demonstrations, the meetings to organize and to discuss the crisis, the interaction among unions, youth, peasants, Afro-Hondurans and women, have tremendously increased political consciousness. There has been a remarkable jump from quantity into quality. They see all the wealth that they have produced. First in the fields—remember Honduras was the "Banana Republic" of Chiquita—and now in the maquilas, the Adidas, the Nikes and so many others. They see all the wealth they make go into the hands of the rich families in Honduras and to the U.S. corporations.

Their struggle now is not only to reinstate Zelaya but for control of the resources, the economy and the country, to take it away from the hands of the oligarchy and the corporations. That is what the struggle for a Constitutional Assembly represents. That is why it is so important, because the current constitution paved the way to privatizations and the transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich and the corporations.

President Zelaya's increasing the minimum wage was the lightning rod. The oligarchy and U.S. corporations initiated the road to the June 28 coup. They would not allow a wage raise or a change of their valuable constitution. But this was also a lesson for the masses: how not even a slight increase on their share of the profits would be tolerated by the rich! And the repression by the state has only pushed the struggle forward.

The struggle in Honduras is part of the tremendous popular developments in Latin America, where the people are trying to take control of their destiny away from U.S. imperialist domination. It is a struggle for the control of society between the workers and the peasants on one side, and the oligarchy and the U.S. corporations on the other. It is happening in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua. Progressive governments in those countries are allied with the masses and are trying to integrate their countries into a powerful bloc that stands up against imperialism. That is what ALBA represents.

But there are many other struggles in the region. For example, in Puerto Rico there is a workers' movement against the layoffs by the pro-U.S. government of Luis Fortuño that has organized work stoppages and is planning a general strike. In Mexico, the movement is growing with militant actions after the layoffs of 46,000 workers from the electricity industry by President Felipe Calderón, a close U.S. ally. In Colombia, the criminal pro-U.S. Uribe paramilitary regime has continued to be fought by an armed insurgency and a popular movement, the former with weapons and the social movement with demonstrations.

Washington is preparing to mount a new military offensive in Latin America to break these progressive developments. The coup in Honduras has been a warning to these countries that imperialism will not stand quietly by and let the people choose their destiny.

That is why the U.S. will accept the result of the Honduran elections with or without President Zelaya restored to office. That is why the U.S. has just signed an agreement with Colombia for the use of seven military bases, which gives the U.S. military almost unlimited access to that country's facilities and guarantees impunity for any criminal act by U.S. forces and that explicitly states the need to wage action against countries that the U.S. considers "enemies," like Venezuela.

There is also the IV Fleet, which can even go into the rivers of the countries in Latin America, and the possibility of four new bases in Panama. And besides the direct military threats, there are the CIA operations to destabilize governments with the help of the opposition forces in those countries. The danger is real.

But the U.S. always discounts the peoples' powerful will to struggle and international solidarity.

We, the working class of the world have a social connection. We have the same interests as the workers in Honduras, in Mexico and everywhere else. If their interests are threatened, so are ours. And so we must respond, with solidarity.

And for us, here in the U.S., it is crucial that we be the most internationalist, because this is the center of imperialism, we then MUST be internationalists to the core!

¡Viva la Resistencia hondureña!

Long live the workers' struggle!

¡El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido! □

Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba

By Leslie Feinberg

This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. The articles are part of the Lavender & Red series from Workers World weekly newspaper. This never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

Available at **www.Leftbooks.com** or in bookstores nationwide.

China-Africa summit in Egypt hailed as success

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A new chapter in relations between the People's Republic of China and the African continent began during the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC), which was held Nov. 6-9 in the Egyptian Red Sea resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao announced eight new measures to enhance partnerships with 53 African states in the areas of agriculture, debt relief, market access expansion, climate change, medical affairs, education, environmental protection and promotion of investment.

The summit was addressed by Premier Wen and was also attended by Chinese Commerce Minister Chen Deming. Wen said that Beijing is "committed to ... going all-out to assist African countries in improving their agricultural production and infrastructure." (South African Mail & Guardian, Nov. 9)

"The Chinese people cherish sincere friendship toward the African people, and China's support to Africa's development is concrete and real," said Premier Wen. "We will help Africa build financing capabilities. We will provide $10 billion for Africa in concessional loans." (Money Morning, Nov. 10)

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit is a continuation of a 2006 meeting that was held in Beijing. Economic cooperation between the PRC and the African continent has accelerated in recent years.

In 2008, China exceeded the United States in becoming the largest trading partner with Africa. Trade between Beijing and the African continent totaled $107 billion, representing a 10-fold increase since 2000.

The Chinese oil industry has announced plans to invest $16 billion in efforts to boost its imports from Africa. The Chinese state-owned company, CNOOC Limited, is conducting negotiations with Nigeria to purchase 6 billion barrels of oil—more than 17 percent of the West African nation's reserves.

This deal, if approved, could generate $30 billion to $50 billion in revenue for Nigeria. Other trade relations between China and Africa involve the importation of large supplies of gold, silver, copper, cobalt, bauxite, iron ore and nickel.

In his statement to the summit, Premier Wen stated: "The rapidly growing relations and cooperation between China and Africa have attracted the world's attention in recent years. I would like to point out that it was not just a few years ago that China suddenly started its presence in Africa or Africa started its support for China." (Xinhuanet.com, Nov. 9)

Wen discussed the shared history between the peoples of Africa and China in the struggle against foreign domination and exploitation. He stressed, "As early as in the 1950s and 60s, China and Africa fought shoulder to shoulder in the historic struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemony and worked side by side in the hard endeavor to revive our respective national economies."

China provides viable alternative to relations with the West

As the FOCAC summit was taking place in Egypt, a ministerial meeting was being held among the finance ministers of the Group of 20 in Scotland. The G-20, which is dominated by the capitalists of the West and Japan, has failed to honor the promises made to the African continent over the last three years.

At the previous G-20 meeting held in Pittsburgh during late September, it was noted by various African states that the economic grouping has not honored its pledges to work seriously toward the alleviation of underdevelopment on the continent. In fact, over the last two years as a result of the global economic crisis, more than 50 million people in Africa have been thrust into poverty.

Daragh Maher, deputy head of global foreign exchange strategy at Calyon Credit Agricole, said of the Scotland meeting, "The G-20 meeting failed to deliver any real specifics as to how it intended to rebalance the global economy, suggesting the drift in the dollar is not likely to be addressed on a coordinated basis." (Associated Press, Nov. 9)

In contrast to these developments in the capitalist states, China has been successful in implementing its economic stimulus program that has produced significant results. According to Money Morning managing editor Jason Simpkins, "While U.S. and European officials this weekend squabbled over the specifics of an economic recovery plan, China took another step to ensure long-term economic growth by inking another multibillion-dollar deal with Africa." (Morning Money, Nov. 10)

Money Morning reported: "Indeed, China has found exceptional economic growth at a time when most of the Western world is struggling back from the brink. A continent rich in commodities, which have been skyrocketing in value, Africa is integral to China's plans for sustained growth." (Nov. 10)

Nonetheless, the imperialist states and their allies have attempted to distort the nature of China's economic and political relationships with various African states. A statement issued by the right-wing Heritage Foundation claims that the PRC "aids and abets oppressive and destitute African dictatorships by legitimizing their misguided policies and praising their development models as suited to individual national conditions."

The Pentagon has criticized the $7 billion in arms exports to the oil-rich nation of Sudan between 2003 and 2007 as evidence of China's support of African states that have been targeted for destabilization by the United States. Zimbabwe has also benefited from political and economic support from China, and the U.S. has often cited this as an indication that Beijing's intentions in Africa are not genuine.

Both presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan were present at the FOCAC summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. In contrast to the statements made by the Heritage Foundation, Zimbabwe hailed the ministerial meeting of FOCAC as a "very successful meeting." (Zimbabwe Herald, Nov. 11)

After the Zimbabwe delegation returned from Sharm el-Sheikh, Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, who accompanied President Mugabe to Egypt, said that "it was a very successful meeting and we are pleased with the manner in which cooperation between Africa and China is developing."

Mumbengegwi continued: "At the last summit in Beijing in 2006, China pledged to assist in a number of ways and so far 95 percent of those promises have been fulfilled. We are confident that by the end of the year all the targets will have been met." (Herald, Nov. 11)

President Mugabe and Chinese Premier Wen held talks on Nov. 7 in Egypt where they agreed on establishing a new development package for Zimbabwe, which has been under Western-imperialist-imposed sanctions since 2000. Zimbabwe came under attack after it enacted a reform program that returned significant land holdings to the African people. This land had been seized by the British colonialists during the 1890s.

In President Mugabe's address to the FOCAC summit on Nov. 8, he said that China's cooperation with Africa provides the best model for relations between states in the economic, political and cultural spheres. Mugabe praised China-Africa partnerships, stating that Beijing had built a strong economy without engaging in looting and plundering of the developing world—as the West has done for centuries. (Xinhuanet, Nov. 11) □

Haitian tongue born in struggle

Creole languages celebrated on Oct. 28

By G. Dunkel

During the last three decades, Oct. 28 has been the day to celebrate creole languages throughout the world. Creole is a stable language that has grown from a mixture of other languages, where the words come from the parent languages but the syntax is generally specific to the particular language.

Haitian Creole made its first contribution to history by facilitating communication among the fighters in the revolutionary army battling French colonialism and slavery.

Most creoles in the Western Hemisphere were formed in the last 500 years as a result of European colonialism and its trade in captured and enslaved people. Like most non-official and minority languages, creoles have generally been regarded—by the academics in service to the oppressor nations—as patois, substandard dialects of their European parents. Many creoles have gone extinct.

This year a number of the smaller countries in the Caribbean—St. Lucia, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Cayenne—had artistic, musical, and academic events using, honoring and examining the creoles they speak.

Haiti is a special case because its Creole, which Haitians call Kreyol, has been an official language since 1987 and is the only language spoken by the vast majority of its 8 million people.

Over half of the soldiers who fought in its war against the French slave masters, which ended with Haiti's independence in 1804, were born in Africa. They needed a common language, a tool to express their unity in the struggle against France, and that tool was Kreyol.

Because they won independence and were not dominated by a European power, their language took deep roots. It was a tool for the peasant majority to oppose the elites, the landlords—the so-called gran doms. Those rulers of Haiti wanted to use French to mark their differences with the masses. Their goal was to replace the African traditions and culture of Haiti with French.

Kreyol radio stations became one of the major inspirations for the "dechoukaj," the movement that in 1986 uprooted the hold of the 20th century dictatorship of the Duvalier family on Haiti.

While the State University of Haiti celebrated Oct. 28 with a series of cultural events, the Asosyasyon Inivèsitè/Inivèsitèz Desalinyen (ASID) held a series of debates/conferences on the political role the use of Kreyol should have in Haiti. One issue ASID brought up was an open letter Esdras Fabien, the deputy from Carrefour, had written to the president of Haiti demanding that Kreyol become the only official language of Haiti. (Haïti Liberté, Oct. 28)

Kreyol became the major language of Haiti through struggle and will maintain its place through struggle. □

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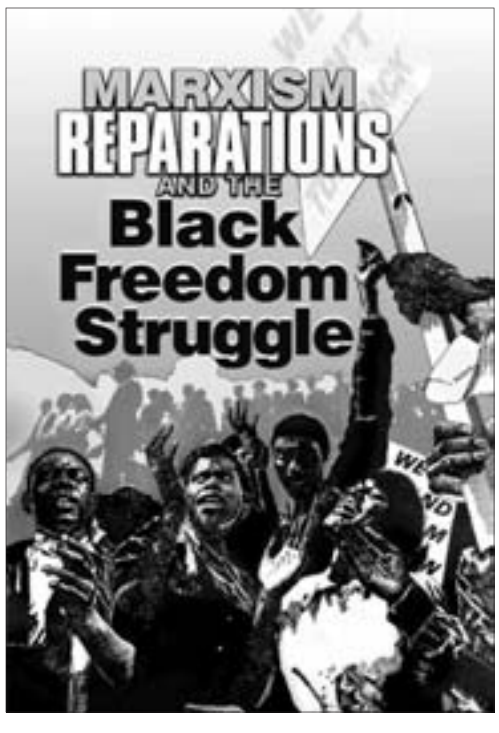

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Honduras: La derecha hace maniobras para prevenir la restauración de Zelaya

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Nov. 9—*"Con Mel o sin Mel, no hay elecciones y quien va adelante es la Resistencia. Vamos a los barrios. ... nuestra única salida es la Resistencia porque unida jamás será vencida. Mi lucha viene desde el 54 y ahora podemos hablar y decir que somos revolucionarios. ....Ahora podemos mandar al diablo esta Constitución que no sirve. Hasta la victoria compañeros, no se me rajen, vamos para adelante ¡Ahora o nunca! ¡Hasta la victoria final"*

Dionisia Sánchez, la Abuela de la Resistencia y ejemplo de la férrea voluntad de lucha del pueblo hondureño, dijo estas palabras el 9 de noviembre, luego de que la Resistencia se reuniera y decidiera no participar en las elecciones generales del 29 de noviembre aunque el Presidente Manuel Zelaya fuera restituido.

Al momento de la redacción de este artículo, no se había logrado ninguna resolución a la peligrosa crisis en Honduras. El gobierno usurpador de Roberto Micheletti continúa aferrándose al poder a toda costa a pesar de haber firmado el 30 de octubre, el Acuerdo Tegucigalpa-San José, el cual habría restituido al Presidente Zelaya antes de las elecciones.

Micheletti unilateralmente anunció el 5 de noviembre la formación de un "Gobierno de Reconciliación" presidido por Micheletti y sin Zelaya. Este cuerpo gubernamental fue propuesto por el acuerdo como un gobierno unitario que habría incluido tanto a representantes de Zelaya como de los golpistas. Después de esta acción, el Presidente Zelaya públicamente anunció la terminación del acuerdo y el fin de cualquier posibilidad de diálogo con el gobierno de facto.

Micheletti hizo su anuncio aún antes de que el Congreso Nacional decidiera sobre la reinstauración de Zelaya. Leal a los golpistas, el congreso ha dilatado el voto con muchas excusas, en una maniobra obvia de retardar el regreso de Zelaya al poder. Estas acciones escamoteadoras, fueron observadas por la "Comisión de Verificación" presente en Tegucigalpa, una formación ordenada por el acuerdo que tendría el deber de asegurarse de que el acuerdo se llevara a cabo.

Hilda Solís, Secretaria del Departamento del Trabajo en EEUU, era parte de esta comisión.

Reacción de la Resistencia

La Resistencia, que durante los últimos días ha estado protestando diariamente frente al Congreso Nacional, se reunió para decidir su posición sobre las elecciones. El 9 de noviembre publicó un comunicado declarando que rechaza al proceso electoral y que la "la participación en tal proceso le daría legitimidad al régimen golpista o a su sucesor que se instalaría fraudulentamente el 27 de enero de 2010.

Rehúsan participar aún si el Presidente Zelaya fuera restituido porque "20 días o menos es un lapso muy corto para desmontar el fraude electoral que se fraguó para asegurar que uno de los representantes de la oligarquía golpista sea impuesto para darle continuidad a su proyecto antidemocrático y represor".

También culparon a los Estados Unidos de complicidad con los golpistas. A la misma vez, la Resistencia reafirmó continuar su lucha para restituir a Zelaya y por una nueva constitución.

El candidato independiente a la presidencia en representación de la Resistencia, Carlos H. Reyes, abandonó la carrera por las mismas razones.

¿Qué hay detrás de las elecciones?

Es revelador que inmediatamente después de la firma del acuerdo y antes de que ocurriera cualquier progreso substancial, tanto la Secretaria de Estado de EEUU Hillary Clinton y su enviado, Thomas Shannon, aceptaron el acuerdo como un hecho consumado. Hugo Llorens, embajador en Tegucigalpa, también hizo un llamado internacional para el reconocimiento de las elecciones del 29 de noviembre. Hasta esta fecha, Estados Unidos está casi completamente aislado sobre esta posición.

¿Por qué tanto apuro? ¿Cuáles son los intereses de Washington?

Hay varias firmas de cabildeo estadounidenses que trabajan a favor del gobierno de Micheletti, de la Asociación de Maquiladores Hondureños y del Consejo de Empresas Latinoamericanas, capítulo de Honduras que representan al final, los intereses financieros y geopolíticos de Estados Unidos. Entre estas firmas están Chlopak, Leonard, Schechter & Associates; El Grupo Corman; Orrick, Herrington & Surcliffe LLP; y la Visión Americas. Lanny Davis, ex consejero legal de Bill Clinton y Roger Noriega, ex asistente del secretario de estado para asuntos del hemisferio occidental, trabajan en algunas de estas firmas.

Además de estas firmas, hay una agencia "no gubernamental" muy poderosa. La Millennium Challenge Corporation (Corporación Desafío del Milenio). Su página de internet la describe como "una agencia estadounidense innovadora e independiente de ayuda para el extranjero que está ayudando en la lucha contra la pobreza global. Creada por el congreso de Estados Unidos en enero del 2004 con fuerte ayuda bipartita, la MCC, (siglas en inglés), está cambiando la conversación sobre cómo entregar mejor asistencia inteligente estadounidense enfocándose en políticas buenas, la propiedad del país, y los resultados".

Se dice en muchos círculos en Honduras que Estados Unidos tiene un candidato preferido, Elvin Santos. Santos era vicepresidente por el Partido Liberal bajo la administración de Zelaya, pero renunció en diciembre pasado para correr para la presidencia. El se opuso al llamado de Zelaya para una Asamblea Constituyente.

Santos es también de la oligarquía, un ingeniero de construcción cuya familia es propietaria de una de las compañías de construcción más grandes del país, Santos y Compañía. Esta compañía firmó un contrato por $7,5 millones con la MCC, (parte de un contrato por $215 millones de la MCC con Honduras), para mejorar la transportación. El contrato era específicamente para la construcción de la carretera CA-5 que une a Tegucigalpa con San Pedro Sula, el área industrial principal del país, y con Puerto Cortés en la costa caribeña en el norte, el más grande y único puerto de aguas profundas en Centroamérica. La Carretera CA-5 también conecta en el sur con el Puerto de Cutuco, en la costa pacífica de El Salvador.

Esta carretera es parte del Corredor Atlántico de la Red Internacional de Carreteras Mesoamericanas, que es el aspecto de transporte del Plan Puebla Panamá. Este plan es un intento más de los EEUU por robar los recursos de los pueblos en Centroamérica, así como de México y Colombia. Se presenta como un proyecto de integración, pero el propósito es facilitar el transporte a través de la región, desde México a Colombia, de productos de EEUU y de mercancías ensambladas o fabricadas en la zona, especialmente en las infames maquiladoras.

Es un conducto para extraer las riquezas de América Latina hacia los EEUU.

¿Quién preside la MCC? Nada menos que Hillary Clinton. También en la junta de MCC están Timothy F. Geithner, Secretario del Tesoro de EEUU y vice-presidente de la junta de MCC, y Alonzo L. Fulgham, administrador interino de la Agencia de EEUU para el Desarrollo Internacional (USAID).

Es evidente que Estados Unidos, al aceptar de antemano el resultado de las elecciones, quiere garantizar la presencia en el gobierno de Honduras de un representante de la oligarquía pro-Estados Unidos que esté interesado en la explotación capitalista de las masas. Incluso si Santos no gana, los otros candidatos golpistas son leales a la misma oligarquía.

Carlos H. Reyes, explica la necesidad de una nueva constitución

El tremendo poder del sector empresarial en Honduras fue explicado por Carlos H. Reyes, durante una larga y esclarecedora conversación cuando esta escritora estuvo en octubre en Honduras con la Delegación EEUU de sindicalistas, activistas comunitarios/as y religiosos en solidaridad con la Resistencia Hondureña. Reyes es el presidente de la Unión STIBYS, Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Bebida y Similares. Él estaba en su casa recuperándose de una agresión por la policía durante una de las manifestaciones de la resistencia, en la que su muñeca derecha fue severamente fracturada.

Explicó la necesidad urgente de una nueva constitución, y la pasión con la que la Resistencia exige una Asamblea Constituyente quedó muy clara.

Explicó que la actual Constitución se redactó durante la década de 1980, cuando EEUU conducía la guerra contra Guatemala, El Salvador y Nicaragua bajo el liderazgo criminal y vicioso de John Negroponte. El propósito era el de "vender el país" (privatizar), reducir el estado y poner a los militares a cargo de la defensa de la Constitución en lugar del pueblo. En suma, se trataba de una Constitución en beneficio de las empresas y sus accionistas.

Reyes expuso cómo el poder y las riquezas fueron transferidos durante estos años. En 1981, las empresas transnacionales y los terratenientes tenían un 40 por ciento del poder, el estado un 40 por ciento, y el pueblo 20 por ciento. Ahora, 28 años después, las transnacionales tienen un 75 por ciento, el estado 20 por ciento, y el pueblo 5 por ciento. Debido a la reducción de sus ingresos, el estado no puede pagar por servicios básicos para las masas.

Reyes explicó que Honduras es un "paraíso financiero y laboral" debido a los bajos salarios, al aumento del trabajo temporal y la subcontratación con absolutamente ningún beneficio ni seguridad laboral, y a las enormes concesiones a las empresas que realmente controlan el gobierno y gobiernan al país para su propio beneficio. Esto ha resultado en la pauperización de las masas, pero ha sido una experiencia enormemente rentable para las empresas de EEUU.

Es por ello que los planes del Presidente Zelaya para cambiar la Constitución y aumentar el salario mínimo fueron opuestos con tanta vehemencia por la oligarquía hondureña y los EEUU.

EEUU fragua más de lo mismo en América Latina

Los hechos recientes en Honduras han sido un intento de los Estados Unidos para poner un alto en los avances progresistas y populares en Latinoamérica, y en particular contra los países participantes de la Alianza Bolivariana para las Américas (ALBA). Esta es la opinión de la mayoría de los/as presidentes/as de Latinoamérica que se han opuesto al golpe militar de Honduras desde el primer día y quienes consideran que EEUU es responsable de no poner fin al golpe de estado. EEUU es el socio comercial y militar más grande de Honduras.

Este golpe de estado ha fortalecido a las oligarquías derechistas de la región que están asociadas a los EEUU.

El 30 de octubre, un tratado militar fue suscrito entre Colombia y EEUU dándole un completo acceso a los EEUU a ese país, incluyendo a siete bases, entre ellas la enorme base de Palanquero cerca de la capital. No fue hasta el 2 de noviembre, después de la firma del acuerdo, que se dio a conocer el acuerdo, a pesar de que los países latinoamericanos lo habían solicitado. En Panamá, existen conversaciones para la apertura de cuatro bases aéreas y navales al acceso de EEUU.

Muchos consideran que las bases son una amenaza para la paz en la región y un precedente muy peligroso que anuncia la intención de Estados Unidos para librar la guerra contra los países que son "anti-Estados Unidos", como expone en un documento oficial, el Departamento de la Fuerza Aérea con respecto a la Base Aérea de Palanquero. El documento menciona la "amenaza constante... de los gobiernos anti-EEUU". (www.centrodealerta.org)

En Paraguay, el presidente Fernando Lugo tuvo que sustituir a los jefes del Ejército, Armada y Fuerza Aérea con personal de su confianza después de rumores de un intento de golpe de estado por la derecha que se opone a las reformas progresistas de Lugo.

Pero Estados Unidos no se da cuenta de que, como dijo el presidente ecuatoriano Rafael Correa, esto no es una época de cambios, sino un cambio de época, refiriéndose al enorme levantamiento de las masas para defender su soberanía y oponiéndose al imperialismo de los EEUU.

bjceci@workers.org *Siguiente: Más sobre Colombia, Panamá y Venezuela.*